

Love is Not a Game by milkydaydreams

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Alternate Universe - High School, Angst, Beverly Marsh Knows Everything, Closeted Character, Coming Out, Eventual Fluff, Friends With Benefits, Friends to Lovers, Gay Eddie Kaspbrak, Gay Richie Tozier, Homophobia, Homophobic Language, Internalized Homophobia, M/M, Mutual Pining, Richie Tozier Loves Eddie Kaspbrak, Slow Burn, Underage Drinking, Underage Drug Use, homophobic violence, they're 17 btw

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Cissy Clark, Eddie Kaspbrak, Henry Bowers, Richie Tozier, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough/Stamley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Richie Tozier/Cissy Clark

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-10-21

Updated: 2019-12-02

Packaged: 2019-12-18 04:02:51

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 6

Words: 14,116

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

“You have a girlfriend, Trashmouth?” Beverly asked as Richie explained the small red bruise on his lower neck that appeared right before summer break.

“Is that so hard to believe?” He scoffed at her. All the Losers nodded, except Eddie, who stared at the ground with an odd expression on his face. He looked lost.

“Whatever man, just keep the PDA to a minimum. Please.” Stan rolled his eyes, letting out a loud sigh. Richie laughed and soon all the others joined him. All except Eddie.

1. Hiding

A fun filled summer finally came to an end. It was September 3rd and school was back in session up in Derry, Maine. The weather was already cooling down, though the summer season wasn't over just yet.

The losers were all in their junior year of high school. Most things seemed normal in their friend group, although a few changes had occurred over the summer.

Through poetic letters and longing stares, Beverly and Ben finally got together after what seemed like forever. Bill began to take his writing more seriously, he even started a small horror novel over the summer. Mike had stood up to his grandfather, telling him how he would much rather work in a calmer industry, to be a journalist. To his surprise, his grandfather came around to the idea, only asking Mike to still help deliver meat.

Stan landed an internship as a insurance company's receptionist. He also came out to Richie as bisexual, telling him about his (not so) tiny crush on Bill that started in freshman year.

Richie stayed the same for the most part, except the fact he would go off with his *girlfriend* every once in a while.

He and Cissy Clark had been dating since May of their sophomore year. They had kept it low-key for a while; the Losers didn't know about her till late June.

"You have a *girlfriend* , trashmouth?" Beverly asked as Richie explained the small red bruise on his lower neck that appeared right before summer break.

"Is that so hard to believe?" He scoffed at her. All the Losers nodded,

except Eddie, who stared at the ground with an odd expression on his face. He looked lost.

“Whatever man, just keep the PDA to a minimum. Please.” Stan rolled his eyes, letting out a loud sigh. Richie laughed and soon all the others joined him. All except Eddie.

Not everyone knew this, only Richie and Eddie, but they had a ‘friends with benefits’ situation going on since February of their sophomore year, about three months before Richie started dating Cissy.

It started on a high, drunken, and very lonely Valentine’s Day, the two of them sitting alone in Eddie’s room. Eddie’s mom had been out of town on a mini business trip but would be back in a couple of days. Richie suggested they got shit-faced and watch some movies to drown their sorrows of single-ness.

When he arrived to Eddie’s house, booze and joints in his backpack, they went straight to Eddie’s room. They tried finding a movie, but nothing seemed interesting to watch. So, they sat down on the floor of Eddie’s room, facing each other in the darkness, moonlight barely keeping the room lit. Richie got out his ‘magic tools’, as he liked to call them, and it didn’t take long before both of them were crossed, barely thinking with a rational mind.

At first, they shared stories of embarrassing moments and gossip about their fellow classmates. However, in the middle of one of Eddie’s stories, Richie couldn’t focus on anything but Eddie’s gorgeous lips. He didn’t mean to say it aloud, but his lips slipped.

“Can I kiss you?”

Once that question floated in the air, there was no taking it back.

There was no denying it, Richie Tozier was absolutely and hopelessly

in love with his childhood best friend. He couldn't tell if it was the weed, or the alcohol, or the way the dim moonlight hit Eddie's face at just the right angle, but Richie found him irresistible.

Eddie froze momentarily, eyes flickering down to Richie's lips and then back to his deep, brown eyes. Eddie's pupils were extremely blown out and he most certainly was *not* thinking of consequences following his actions, but he wasn't going to deny his body of it wanted, not right now.

"Yeah," he responded quietly, letting out a breath he didn't realize he was holding in.

Richie was shocked at Eddie's response, but was going to let this moment escape his grasp. He leaned in slowly, due to fear of rejection, but also because he couldn't move too fast without wobbling. He cupped Eddie's freckled face, watching his eyes flutter close, noting in his head how gorgeous Eds' long eyelashes are. It felt spectacular when Richie's rough lips met Eddie's soft ones. It was all so surreal.

Richie pulled back to get reassurance from the trembling boy in front of him, but Eddie grabbed his shirt and pulled him back in, crashing their lips together. That night, they didn't go further than making out and enjoying each other's company. They didn't discuss formalities or labels for whatever was going on between them the next morning when they both woke up in Eddie's full sized bed, leaving both boys in the dark with their feelings.

Eddie didn't know about Cissy until Richie told the rest of the Losers. He couldn't help but be hurt, he thought he was Richie's one and only. Though, deep down he had always known Richie was just using him for hormonal pleasure. Still, Eddie couldn't bring himself to call off whatever he had with Richie. There was no way Eddie could let go of something that felt so natural and so perfect.

Over that summer, the two boys continued to sneak off together on late nights, doing things neither would want to admit to anyone but each other. Eddie thought his feelings would start to disappear after a

while now that he knew he never had a chance. Yet, it seemed to be the exact opposite and his feelings for his lanky, annoying friend only grew.

Richie dealt with his feelings for Eddie differently. He would cherish Eddie in their alone time, never taking his hands off of him. Richie always had his hands on Eddie's waist, or his arm around Eddie's shoulders, or have his pinkie interlocked with Eddie's smaller one. His mind constantly screamed 'Eddie'. However, when they were with the other Losers, Richie would avoid Eddie as if he were disgusted by the other boy. Not to mention, Richie began to ditch the Losers hangouts all together to be with Cissy.

It was second period of the first day of school and the Losers hadn't seen each other in a week and a half. Richie, Eddie and Beverley had the same class, 'World History'. Richie staggered in a minute after the late bell rang because he got lost on his way there. He wore a long sleeved, black shirt with a black and red Hawaiian shirt loosely buttoned over it. Richie also had on a pair of beat-up, black jeans. Though he had grown up, his style didn't change too much.

He spotted Eddie and Beverley in the back corner of the class, Eddie sat one seat in front of the corner desk and Bev next to it. Eddie was wearing a handsome, pale pink button up shirt. He also wore a simple silver chain around his neck, which Richie was strangely attracted to. Beverly had a white sweater on with a muted orange overall dress on top. She wore a pair of 'hot, boss-bitch shoes' as she would call them, but they were just black combat boots. Bev had grown her hair out into a cute bob over the summer, too. The corner seat was obviously saved for Richie, which made him smile. He waltzed over as the teacher made a disappointed face at him.

"What's up, Molly Ringwald?" Richie winked as he sat next to Beverly. Bev let out a laugh and rolled her eyes. "Nothin much, Tozier." She answered plainly, shooting a glance over to Eddie, who head hung low, looking down at his desk. She then looked back to Richie, who she caught staring at the smaller boy with an almost

saddened expression.

Beverly twisted her face in confusion. Instantly, she could tell something was incredibly off. She noticed during the summer how the two boys had grown distant, noticed how Eddie would tense up when Richie would walk close to him. She noticed when she and Richie would go out to smoke, there always was something on his mind he wouldn't tell her. Beverly even noticed the way Eddie's eyes became glossy when Richie went to hang out with his girlfriend.

She'd always wanted to ask Eddie about it, but he and Bev were never too close. However, at this point she was just worried about him.

The teacher began to speak at the front of the room. Introducing herself and going over the basic first day of school formalities. Richie and Beverly talked throughout, not giving the teacher an ounce of their attention. Eddie was desperately trying to focus on the teacher, but lost helplessly as he began to eavesdrop. *It was definitely not eavesdropping. It's their fault for being so loud*, Eddie told to himself.

"So, how are things with Haystack?" Richie asked in a tone that was supposed to be quiet, but he never truly could be. She laughed dryly, "Can you even call him that anymore? He's more fit than you by now, Noodle Arms."

Richie punched her arm lightly, repressing a hearty laugh. Eddie stifled a laugh regarding Bev's comment too. Richie would admit, Ben *had* been working out a bit and probably didn't deserve that nickname anymore, but he was definitely still going to use it.

The teacher, Mrs. Nelson, stood in the front of the room with her chubby arms folded across her large chest. She reminded Richie of Eddie's mom. Mrs. Nelson was an enormous woman, short and stout. She a

wore a floral dress that was obviously a size or two *too* small. Richie couldn't help but let out a wheezy laugh at her expression alone. Her cheeks puffed out and her lips were pressed in a tight line, smearing her poorly applied lipstick further.

"Something you'd like to share with the class, Mr. Tozier and Ms. Marsh?" Mrs. Nelson asked with her painfully nasally voice. Before Richie could speak, Beverly put her fingers over his lips to silence him.

"We're perfectly fine, Mrs. Nelson!" Beverly replied in a high pitch, singsong-y voice. The teacher let out a loud and long sigh, knowing she was in trouble for the rest of the year with these two in her class.

Richie was trying so hard not to laugh, he went to punch the back of Eddie's shoulder playfully, but stopped his hand. He almost forgot about he was trying to avoid Ed's and how Eddie was most *definitely* mad at Richie for it. He couldn't blame him, though. Richie would be devastated if he was in his Eddie-Spaghetti's situation. Yet, he couldn't treat Eddie the same way he used to. Not if he wanted his plan to work. This is just how it had to be.

For about 15 minutes, Richie and Beverly quieted down. They let Mrs. Nelson actually talk to her class until she dismissed them early to talk amongst themselves. Eddie was about to pop his ear buds in so he could painfully avoid listening to Beverly and Richie, but Beverly tapped lightly on his sleeve to get his attention.

"You look so down, bud." Beverly spoke in a caring, yet cautious tone. Eddie turned around to face her. He glanced over to see if Richie was looking, but he was staring out the window, being oddly quiet. He focused his attention back on Beverly and offered her a weak smile.

"What do you mean?" He tried to sound chipper and alert like normal, but it all came out delicate and sad, it didn't help his breath caught in his throat before he even started speaking. Her eyes were soft, Eddie always knew how truly kind she was when she wasn't joking around.

“You know, I’m always here if you want to talk,” She leaned in and hushed her tone a bit, “I noticed you and Richie seem a little off, I don’t want you to ever feel alone.” She smiled warmly while pulling back once again. Just hearing Richie’s name made him flinch, which was funny since Richie was literally sitting right behind him and it still affected him so much. She could tell they were off? What does off even mean? What if Richie told her? *Oh my God* , what if Richie *told* her. Eddie, although suddenly feeling very sick, smiled back solemnly, “Thank you, it means a lot to me.”

Richie was desperately trying to listen in on what the two were trying to talk about. Eddie was sad? The thought of that hurt Richie’s heart more than he’d like to admit. Eddie told him everything. Being in the dark about what’s going on in Eddie’s life was horrible. What if his mom was hurting him again or shoving more pills down his throat? What if someone had done something to Eddie, emotionally or physically? He wanted to hold Eddie. He wanted Eddie to know everything is okay. He wanted Eddie to be okay.

Richie suddenly got a bright idea and whipped his phone out. He needed to see Eddie alone, ask about what was going on, hold onto Eddie like his life depended on it. His thumbs slid across the screen of his phone and he opened his iMessage app. He scrolled to his past texts with Eddie and smiled fondly reading them. All of Eddie’s snappy replies to Richie’s stupid jokes and pictures filled his heart with joy. He missed that so much. He began to type, tapping on his phone rapidly.

‘hey. pls come over this weekend. i miss u spaghetti’

Richie almost sent that whole message, but promptly deleted the last sentence before hitting send. He couldn’t bring himself to truly let Eddie know how much he actually missed him. He watched Eddie shift in his seat as his phone vibrated in his pocket. Richie watched intensely as Eddie pulled his phone out. Eddie was about to turn on his phone, but the school bell rung out through the quiet classroom, signaling that second period was over.

Beverly put a firm hand on Richies shoulder, "See ya around, Trashmouth." She smiled down at him. "Give Ben a kiss for me next period." Richie said, pushing his glasses up and making a kissy face at her.

"Beep Beep, Richie." She flicked his nose, smiling fondly and walked out of the class next to Eddie. Richie watched as the two exchanged formalities of goodbyes. He almost forgot he, too, needed to leave and go to his next class.

2. Lies Hurt

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie smile faded as he watched Eddie look behind him and scowl. He, unfortunately, knew that high pitched shrill far too well. For a moment, Richie debated not even turning around, Maybe she's like a T-Rex? Don't move and she won't see you. Of course that weren't true and Richie had to turn around, but Eddie looked so sad. Was Eddie sad about him earlier, too?

Richie's day had been going by painfully slow. He only made it to half of his classes so far, but he was over school already. There was no joy in his classes since he got separated from the other Losers.

Thankfully, it was now fifth period and he had lunch. He strolled over to the cafeteria with his ear buds popped in, blaring music. He walked into the large room, filled to the brim with students, and sighed seeing no place to sit. Before he was about to give up all hope and head to the bathroom to chill, he heard his name shouted from across the room. Richie was never so thankful for his height, he could see over any other wandering students and saw Bill waving frantically at him with a disappointed Stan next to him. Richie beamed and walked over to them, pulling his earbuds out on the way.

"Stan the Man! Bill! What is up, my dudes?" He laughed, sitting across from them. Stan rolled his eyes at the nickname but smiled stubbornly at his friend.

"Y-you looked like a l-lost g-gi-giraffe." Bill told him, smiling as he took a sandwich out of his bag. Richie gasped, pretending to be offended at his friends statement, but fell into giggles.

"I don't know about you guys but this day has been plain painful. I'm so sick of this shit! I just want to go home and sleep." Richie complained as he pulled out a sandwich too.

“Really? I feel like I’ve only been at school for like an hour or so. Though, I’m still waiting to get out of here.” Stan replied as he dug into his salad. Richie laughed at Stan’s disgruntled face as he stole a crouton off of it.

“I’ve had B-Bowers in m-my class twice al-already.” Bill sighed before taking a bite of his lunch. Stan and Richie both grimaced, knowing that because Ben lost some weight, Bill was his main target, at least they thought so. Stan put a sympathetic hand on Bill’s shoulder, apologizing to him with his eyes. Richie almost felt awkward as they stared into each others eyes, far longer than normal friends would do. *Almost.*

“Kiss, kiss, kiss.” Richie chanted quietly, so he wouldn’t drag too much attention to them.

Stan shot him a glare that could kill, but Richie only laughed harder as he watched a faint blush spread across Bill’s cheeks.

“Speaking of, how are you and Cissy?” Stan questioned, tilting his head in curiosity. Richie paused, slightly choking on his sandwich.

Cissy was a great girl. She was beautiful and crazy about Richie. Any other guy would be crazy about her. Richie thought she was nice, but that was about it. Nice. Even though they had been dating for a few months now, Richie still never made any kind of true connection. He assumed it would just happen on it’s own if he was with her enough. Cissy told him everything and trusted him wholeheartedly, but Richie couldn’t do the same.

“Oh y’know, we’re good.” He pushed out an awkward laugh. Richie twiddled with his thumbs under the table, hoping they’d move to a different topic as soon as possible. Stan and Bill both made confused faces, which would have made Richie laugh in any other circumstance, but both shrugged after a moment.

Lunch went on as normal, they talked about weekend plans, classes, things they were excited for, Stan went on about birdwatching for what felt like forever. The bell rang, signaling lunch was over, and students flooded out of the cafeteria.

Richie's sixth period was dull, but thankfully passed quickly.

He walked through the hallways with his earbuds blasting loud enough for a person walking by to hear. He walked into his physical science class and scanned the room for a familiar face. Richie let out a sigh but his breath got caught in his throat when he saw Eddie looking up at him, like a deer in headlights.

None of the other Losers were in here? Most of these kids looked quite nerdy themselves? Bowers and his gang weren't there? Then what was the harm of sitting next to Eddie? Richie began to radiate happiness as he moved towards his childhood friend. His heart skipped a beat when a small smile on Eddie's lips appeared, fiery blush spreading across his cheeks. Richie was about to open his mouth and crack a joke, ready to move the desks next to each other and wrap his arm around his Eddie-Spaghetti. Richie was so excited to finally see him and hold him and-

“ *Richieeeeeee !*”

Richie smile faded as he watched Eddie look behind him and scowl. He, unfortunately, knew that high pitched shrill far too well. For a moment, Richie debated not even turning around, *Maybe she's like a T-Rex? Don't move and she won't see you.* Of course that weren't true and Richie had to turn around, but Eddie looked so sad. Was Eddie sad about him earlier, too?

He was snapped out of his thoughts as a delicate hand was placed on his shoulder.

“ *Richieeeeeeee .*” The same, annoying, whine again. Richie backed up from Eddie and spun around, being greeted by none other than Cissy Clark. He suppressed a groan of annoyance and plastered a smile on his face. He knew Eddie was right behind him, he was painfully aware of it.

She leaned up to kiss Richies lips, but he tilted his head so she'd only touch his cheek.

“ *Ohhhhhh* my god! I'm so glad we have a class together! I already missed you so much!” Cissy squealed, wrapping her arms around Richie's waist. He forced a chuckle out, patting her back.

“Let's go sit by the window!” She beamed, already pulling him towards some available seats across the room. Richie looked behind him to see Eddie with his head hung low, fidgeting with his fingers and water dripping off his nose? Water? It took Richie a moment to realize, Eddie was *crying*. Just the sight made him want to run to Eddie and hold him. The worst part was, he couldn't. Cissy gently pushed him into a desk and interlocked their fingers.

She was talking about her day and already complaining about people. Richie tried to look interested, but all of his attention was focused on the other boy across the room. Eddie was crying. Richie made Eddie cry. That thought alone made goosebumps crawl along Richie's skin and he shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“ *Babe* , what's wrong?” That pet name made Richie cringe internally and had to resist scrunching his nose at Cissy. He laughed and put his arm around her.

“Everything is aye-okay!” He tried to reassure her.

The late bell sounded out through the classroom, causing the students to quiet down. Richie retracted his arm from around Cissy, *saved by the bell*, He thought.

The teacher began to go over the units and supplies the students will need after she introduced herself. Cissy kept trying to talk to Richie, but for once he was trying to focus on the teacher. Not that he cared about the class, but it was better than pretending to be in love with Cissy. Even while he tried to focus, he still glanced over at Eddie now and then, longing for him.

Curse Richie's poor sight because he couldn't quite make out if Eddie was glancing back at him from time to time.

Richie was desperate to talk to Eddie, so he pulled his phone out of his pocket and hid it under his desk. He turned it on and opened his iMessage app yet again. Eddie hadn't opened his text from the morning either, but Richie didn't care about double texting.

'eddie. are u okay? pls talk to me'

He sent the message, though he cringed at how desperate it sounded. He watched Eddie take out his phone and glance down at it, then glancing over to Richie. Richie offered a small, sorry-looking grin and Eddie rolled his eyes. Richie couldn't tell if Eddie was actually annoyed or just playing along like he normally did. He watched Eddie begin to type and Richie's head snapped down to his phone, watching the small "..." dance in the text bubble.

'I'm peachy, Rich. And about the weekend, sure.'

Richie laughed quietly to himself, Eddie always typed with proper capitalization and proper grammar, it was something Richie couldn't help but awe over. Richie looked back over to Eddie, hoping to see his smiling face, but Eddie was watching the teacher again with a dull expression. Richie sighed and began to type again.

'see u soon then ;)'

Richie slipped his phone away, but he couldn't help but feel like there were harsh eyes on him. He turned to the teacher, but out of the corner of his eye he saw Cissy glaring at him. He turned to her and raised one of his eyebrows.

"What's up?"

"*What's up?*" Who were you texting?" She asked, venom in her words. Richie scrunched his face up, she was mad at him for texting Eddie? All she knew was that they were friends. She didn't even know how close they really were, no one did.

"I was texting my friend? What's wrong?" Richie was trying not to panic, *there's no reason to be. She doesn't know about Eddie*, he tried to reassure himself.

"You were smiling the whole time you texted. Are you talking to a

girl?" Cissy asked, her tone harsh. Richie shook his head in disbelief, but grabbed her hand regardless.

"I was texting one of my *guy* friends. There's nothing to worry about, Cis." He smiled softly at her. Thankfully, she calmed down a bit, nodding with a sheepish smile on her lips.

Richie didn't like lying to her, Cissy was a lovely girl. Yet, there was no way he would leave her anytime soon. If he had to string her along to hide himself, he would. He felt bad, but not bad enough to stop.

The rest of the class went by slowly and uneventful. Cissy kept kissing Richie's neck and cheek throughout class, the teacher scolding them a couple times. Eddie felt sick to his stomach. It made his heartache watching Richie and Cissy giggle and cuddle together. Of course, Eddie got *special* treatment from Richie, but only when they were alone. It was all so painful knowing that he didn't care enough about Eddie for him to be Richie's only partner. Eddie was shameful of himself, knowing that he was allowing himself to be used by his friend. Eddie was also extremely shameful and disgusted by himself for wanting Richie so bad, even after all his mother's harsh warnings as he grew up. He couldn't help but look forward to meeting up with Richie on the weekend. Eddie wanted to be praised, feel adored and feel loved. He never felt like that with anyone but Richie. He loved Richie. More than anything. Yet, he knew Richie would never feel the same. So, he decided to cling onto his slice of paradise until it was stripped away from him.

Eddie cursed at himself as he missed most of what the teacher was saying, too busy dealing with his thoughts to pay attention. Thankfully, the last bell of the day rang through the school and students rushed out the door. Eddie took his time to pack his things since he walked home. *Busses are too dangerous without seatbelts!* He heard his mothers nagging tone in the back of his head.

He watched Richie and Cissy head towards the door, their fingers intertwined. Eddie scrunched his nose up at the sight. However, Richie turned to him with a sympathetic smile, waving with his free

hand at Eddie before leaving the room. He was sure Richie's wave was meant to calm Eddie's nerves and make him feel better. Yet that was the opposite of what happened. Eddie's eyes began to sting as tears tried to escape. He hurried packing up his things and dashed out of the classroom, then out the school. His walk was supposed to be swift and brief, but little did he know, things wouldn't play out that way.

Notes for the Chapter:

thank you for the support on my last chapter! new chapters will be updated every monday! i have everything planned out and we're looking at 7/8 chapters! hang in there :D

3. Love Is Painful

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie was abruptly pulled out of his thoughts as he felt a hard object hit him between his shoulder blades. He yelped and whipped his head around to see who or what that was. A baseball bounced lightly on the ground with something scribbled on it, slowly rolling away from him. His heart sank and he felt a lump begin to form in his throat as he looked around the park and noticed no one else was in sight. Reluctantly, Eddie picked the ball up to read whatever message was on it, once skimming it, then twice reading each word individually. He gasped and grabbed for his inhaler, which he only kept on himself for emergencies.

Notes for the Chapter:

homophobic violence TW!!!!

Eddie calmed himself down about half way through his walk home. His mom wasn't home till Sunday so he wasn't in a rush to get home. He strolled along, taking in his surroundings. He took mental notes about all the places he passed, where the Losers hung out, where he and Richie hung out. He really missed when things were that simple and everyone could hang out together.

He also made note of one specific tree sitting on the side of a park he was passing. He smiled solemnly to himself. One summer night, he and Richie snuck out of Eddie's house and came to the park. No one was there or around it, it felt like they were the only two people in the world. They rolled around in the grass and tackled each other like they were carefree kids again. Eddie grimaced at his clothes covered in grass stains and dirt, so he walked over to that tree to take a break. Richie stripped his jacket and revealed a clean band-tee. He tore the clean shirt off and offered it to Eddie, a big, goofy smile on his face. Eddie grinned back and lazily threw off his dirty shirt and replaced it with Richie's over sized one. It smelt like him. They giggled together,

hugging and kissing under that tree for hours. It felt perfect.

Eddie's heart ached. He missed that so much. Richie was his escape from everything; his mother, Bowers, himself. Yet, now it felt like they were light years apart. Of course, Eddie had the other Losers, but he still felt so alone when Richie wasn't around.

Eddie was abruptly pulled out of his thoughts as he felt a hard object hit him between his shoulder blades. He yelped and whipped his head around to see who or what that was. A baseball bounced lightly on the ground with something scribbled on it, slowly rolling away from him. His heart sank and he felt a lump begin to form in his throat as he looked around the park and noticed no one else was in sight. Reluctantly, Eddie picked the ball up to read whatever message was on it, once skimming it, then twice reading each word individually. He gasped and grabbed for his inhaler, which he only kept on himself for emergencies.

FAGGOTS DON'T BELONG IN DERRY.

Eddie looked behind him and didn't see anyone. He looked forward to double check and his face was met with a harsh, cold fist. He could feel rings and knuckles meet his soft face, making him topple over and fall onto his back. He wheezed coarsely and opened his eyes. Towering over him was Bowers and his friends. Tears streamed down Eddie's face, out of fear and sheer pain. He felt blood dripping down his face, but not sure from where.

"Y'know, fuckin' faggots like you shouldn't be walkin' alone. It'd be a real fuckin' shame if somethin' were to happen to a pretty boy like you." Henry snarled, grabbing at his crotch. His friends laughed as Henry kicked Eddie's ribs, causing Eddie to cough and grip his side. Eddie propped himself up on his elbows, about to retaliate before he was cut off by another one of the boys.

"You fuckin' filthy fags aren't welcome here!" Belch Huggins yelled, spitting on Eddie's face. Eddie scrambled, trying to get up all the way

but the bigger boys kept kicking him, stepping on his fingers or grabbing at him. He laid on the dirty pavement, covered in his own blood and others spit, crying.

“Nothin’ to say, huh? Fuckin’ pathetic. You’re lucky I don’t fuckin’ kill ya right here!” Henry shouted, kicking Eddie’s face, causing his head to hit the ground. Eddie groaned, holding back a scream. He moved his arms to shield his face from anymore abuse. After a few more kicks from the older boys, they ran off as they saw people begin walking into the park.

Eddie laid on the ground, finally grabbing his inhaler and taking two generous puffs. He trembled like a leaf in the wind. He sobbed, choking on his own spit. He was bleeding profusely. His nose was bleeding and maybe even broken, his lip was split open, he definitely had at least one black eye. His elbows were scraped raw and his lovely, yellow shirt was stained in blood.

Finally, he stood up, almost falling over. Eddie took his now cracked phone out of his pocket and turned it on. Thankfully, it still worked and he scrolled through his contacts. He couldn’t call his mother, she’d probably have a heart attack, plus she wasn’t home. He debated calling Richie, but he knew seeing Richie would make him feel worse about the situation at hand. He decided on Bill, since they would have deep talks from time to time when things got rough. He clicked the call button and waited for an answer. He tapped his foot on the pavement, trying to reassure his body was alive and functioning. That answer never came. He was sent to voicemail after waiting thirty seconds or so. Eddie knew that it wasn’t Bill’s fault that he didn’t answer, he was a busy guy since he helped his family out so much, but he couldn’t help but being to sob harder. He never felt so alone and helpless. He started walking home when people began to stare at him, he didn’t blame them though, staring at a bleeding, bruised and crying kid on his own. He directed his attention to his phone and scrolled through his contacts a little further, where Beverly’s name popped up. She told him earlier today he could talk to her, right? Well, he definitely needed someone to talk to now. He clicked the call button and waited about five seconds before he got an answer.

“Hey Eddie! What’s up?” Bev beamed on the other line, causing him to let out a quiet and broken laugh.

“Hey, I know you’re probably-“ His voice was coarse and he was still crying, his breath caught after almost every word. She cut him off.

“What’s wrong Eddie?” Her voice was concerned, it was obvious in her tone. He smiled and let out another weak laugh. He hated worrying people, especially his friends, it made him feel so weak.

“Could you- could you come to my house?” He asked in broken sobs, “I-I ran into some trouble and need help.” He cried harder, but could still hear Beverly shuffling through the phone.

“Say no more, I will be there as soon as I can.” She assured him, then hung up before he could even thank her.

Eddie stumbled home and into his house, but remembered to take his shoes off at the door. He left the door unlocked for Beverly and climbed the stairs, carefully so he didn’t collapse.

A knock at the door sounded through the quiet house as soon as Eddie made into his mother's bathroom.

“It’s open!” He yelled from upstairs, but instantly fell into a coughing fit. He heard the door open and close, then steps up the stairs. He was still coughing as he looked up to see Beverly’s worried face standing in the doorway. She fell to her knees next to him and grabbed Eddie’s face softly. He finally stopped coughing and more tears spilled from his eyes and down his cheeks.

“Eddie,” she whispered fearfully, “what happened?”

He tried to laugh, to reassure her that he was okay, but he couldn’t help but sob harder. He was embarrassed by all of this, feeling so helpless and having to rely on someone else.

“B-Bowers got me after school.” He whispered between cries. Beverly pulled him in for a hug, but pulled back after a moment when she realized Eddie was wincing in pain. Beverly looked him up and down, tears filling her eyes too.

“I am so sorry.” She couldn’t think of anything else to say. They stood quietly for a moment, Beverly making a plan in her head. “Where’s the medical stuff?” She knew Eddie was definitely stocked with an

abundance of supplies for wound care. Eddie pointed to a drawer under the sink as he shifted uncomfortably in all of his dirty clothes.

“Take your shirt off, so we can bandage you up.” Beverly instructed, pulling wraps, gauze and cleaning supplies out of the drawer. He complied and peeled his blood-soaked shirt off. Eddie grabbed his side, groaning in pain. Beverly turned her head and gasped. By the look of her face, Eddie could tell it was bad. There was a huge, yellow and purple bruise traveling up up his torso.

“Do you have ice-packs?” She questioned, standing up with all her supplies. Eddie nodded, “Yeah, down stairs in the freezer.” He offered her a small smile, signaling he calmed down a bit, but tears still ran down his flushed cheeks. “I’ll be right back.” With that, she darted out of the bathroom, leaving Eddie by himself.

He stood up weakly, his knees still shaking slightly. He walked up to the mirror and sighed as he saw himself. He was right, he had a black eye and a yellow ring around the other, his lip was split on the side and he had scratches on his cheeks, plus a gash across his forehead. Thankfully, his nose didn’t look broken. He raised his hand to his face and gently touched his lip, immediately cringing in pain. His torso was covered in bruises and his ribs looked raw.

Beverly came back with a sad smile on her face, motioning for Eddie to come sit on the side of the tub with her. She gave him two ice packs, one for his eye and one for the darkest bruise on his ribs.

“Thank you, I’m sorry I called you over.” Eddie hung his head low, but only for a hand to gently touch his chin and guide his gaze back up.

“Please don’t apologize. I’m glad I’m here for you.” She paused, looking cautiously into Eddie’s eyes, “Why’d Henry and his guys go after you so viciously?” Eddie knew that question was coming, but he really wish it didn’t. He wanted to spill everything to Beverly, about him and Richie. Though, Eddie knew he couldn’t speak for Richie since he didn’t even know the full truth. He stayed quiet for a moment searching for the words to say. He had finally stopped crying, but tears began to pour out again as he started to talk.

“Beverly,” He squeaked, gripping his ice packs tighter. “I’m- I think- I think I’m gay.” Eddie whispered the last part, not wanting to admit the truth aloud. Beverly’s eyes softened and put a gentle hand on Eddie’s cheek, being mindful of the bruises and scratches.

“It’s okay,” She whispered, smiling softly at him. He couldn’t help but cry harder, choking out sobs yet again. She didn’t shush him or tell him to stop, she just held his cheek in her hand and let him cry. Finally, Eddie didn’t feel as alone anymore.

They finally finished washing and bandaging Eddie’s wounds, the two talking and giggling together.

“And, done!” She exclaimed, poking Eddie’s nose gently, laughing as he scrunched his face up. Eddie stood up, still shirtless, and walked to mirror. He scanned his body, all the bandages trailing up his chest and sides, his obvious black eye and his busted, swollen lip. He couldn’t but let out a quiet laugh.

“Thank you, Dr. Marsh.” He smiled, turning back to Beverly.

“Oh, well of course, Mr. Kaspbrak!” She beamed back, cleaning up wrappers and boxes. They laughed and chatted a bit more, walking downstairs of Eddie’s house.

“Would you- uh- want to stay and watch a movie? I can make us something to eat?” Eddie purposed sheepishly. He really wanted the company tonight since his mother’s presence wasn’t there. Beverly’s content smile spread to an ecstatic one.

“I would love to!” She bursted into giggles. With only the two of them and no cares, it felt like they were truly kids again. Eddie was taken back of how close they had gotten in one afternoon, but she now knew the biggest secret of his life.

Eddie popped popcorn and made a frozen pizza for them to share. “It’s not the fanciest but I’m too tired to make anything good.” He laughed, carrying a tray to his living room. Beverly was already comfy under a blanket on the couch with her legs curled under her.

“Still better than I could do.” She admitted, moving over so Eddie had room to sit as well. They decided to watch some cheesy rom-coms to lighten Eddie’s spirits; secretly he was a sucker for movies like that. The cozy night was filled with laughs and stupid remarks about how stupid the male lead was, crying and embracing each other at the end of each movie when everything worked out. Eddie fell asleep on the couch around eleven. Beverly tucked him in, left a little note of encouragement on the door so he couldn’t miss it, and took her leave.

She knew all the Losers would ask about what happened tomorrow, but that was tomorrow’s fight. She was just glad she had time with Eddie and was able to help him.

Notes for the Chapter:

happy halloween! early update! it hurt me too, hope you enjoyed it nonetheless! <3

4. Comforting Times

Summary for the Chapter:

“I guess there’s a rumor he heard about me being...” he paused and searched the Losers faces for some type of reassurance. Beverly’s mouth was already gaping, but in a small smile, knowing what was coming.

Eddie shook his head and furrowed his eyebrows yet again.

“About me being gay.” Eddie choked. Before anyone could speak, he began again, more frantic to get the words out.

“And, y’know what? That’s right. I’m... I’m gay.”

Notes for the Chapter:

whoa!! 70 kudos and almost 1000 hits? that’s incredible! i’m so thankful you like my work :,) <3
here’s a soft chapter to make up for chapter 3 :)

Eddie didn’t know what he’d do without his calculator watch.

He woke abruptly to it’s loud ringing, signaling he had to take his morning pills. If it didn’t go off, he probably wouldn’t have woken up till late morning and definitely wouldn’t have gotten to school in time.

However, he also woke up to an extreme pounding in his head. He almost forgot about getting beaten up yesterday. *Almost.*

Groggily, he rolled off the couch and dragged his feet upstairs. He grimaced as he realized he slept in his jeans from the day before. *Gross.*

He made it to his room and got dressed, he’d change the bandages on his torso when he got home. He then went to his bathroom and stared at himself for a moment. There was no hiding the fact he got beat up yesterday. His whole face was bruised and discolored. Eddie

was disgusted by his own appearance.

He sighed and took his abundance of pills, plus an ibuprofen for his head and aches. He did the rest of his morning routine, showering, brushing his teeth and more before he headed downstairs.

Richie and him used to walk to school together, but since Richie started dating Cissy, that never happened anymore. It hurt Eddie's feelings more than he'd want to admit aloud. *She's his girlfriend, Eddie. Of course he'd want to hang out with her instead of not you.*

Eddie got a tight feeling in his stomach and decided he wasn't very hungry anymore. He walked to the door, about to leave, but saw a note hanging there. The instant he saw the gorgeous, cursive writing, he knew it was from Bev.

He smiled to himself, remembering the great time he had with her yesterday. Sure, the situation of *why* they hung out yesterday wasn't the best, but the time they spent together was.

The note read: *hey eddie, you fell asleep on the couch last night during the best part of the movie! so disappointed i had to cry by myself. anyways, i'm coming to stop by and pick you up in the morning in big red. i'll be round by 7:30. love you!*

His heart clenched and a smile ripped across his face. He was so thankful for her. He checked his watch at it was already 7:25. He stood at the door, looking at the note and smiling like a big idiot. Having his friend care about him, having anyone care about him in a non-controlling way and a genuine care way, was the best thing Eddie could possibly ask for.

He decided to go to the kitchen and grab a water bottle and a snack bar for lunch. Though Eddie was a health-freak, he didn't eat much on his own, not unless someone told him to. Still, he couldn't wipe the smile off his face. It seemed silly, being so excited to have a friend care about you in a minimum fashion. Yet, Eddie hadn't truly felt that since Richie started distancing himself. Sure, the other Losers cared about him, but they never hung out one on one anymore, so having that again was like a slice of *heaven* for Eddie.

He heard a car horn honk outside, breaking him out of his blissful daydream. He grabbed his bag, slung it over his shoulder and headed out the door, making sure to lock it behind him.

And there Bev was, in a big, worn down truck. She bought the truck off the side of the road on a whim last year, sure it wasn't in the best shape, but Beverly loved it nonetheless. Of course, she was smiling as she reached over and opened the passenger side door, since it didn't open from the outside. Eddie happily hopped in and giggled as she put a hand on his.

She gave him a sad, sympathetic sigh. "Your face still looks pretty rough. Does it hurt?"

Eddie nodded and lowered his head, he almost forgot the other Losers hadn't seen him yet and would probably ask an ungodly amount of questions.

"It'll get better..." he mumbled, playing with his thumbs in his lap.

She nodded and turned on the car radio, not letting their silence become uncomfortable. Old rock music began to blare through the speakers and Eddie could help but giggle as Beverly bopped her head along, her curls bouncing in sync with the beat. It didn't take much time for Eddie to join in, not as intensely as Beverly, which was probably unsafe due to the fact she was *driving* but Eddie didn't have the heart to scold her. They giggled, sang and "danced" the whole way to school.

Finally they arrived and Bev pulled into her parking spot. Stopping the car, she turned to Eddie with a breathless smile, which faded into a sympathetic one yet again.

"If they ask too much, I will personally beat them up for you." She winked and watched a stupidly wide grin spread across Eddie's face.

"Thank you, really." He laughed and slung his bag over his shoulder. "Shall we?" He motioned at the truck door before opening it.

"We shall!"

It was unfortunate how far away from the school building Bevs parking spot actually was. It took the two of them about 5 minutes of walking just to reach the stream of busy students also entering the school. The losers always met up by the band room before first period, since Stan was there first anyways, and told them it was basically empty before the bell rang. Eddie and Beverly were running a bit later than normal, but they both had enough time to talk for at least fifteen minutes.

“I’ll go in and give a rundown of what not to do, okay?” Bev grinned. She was already in the room before Edie could protest that he could handle it. He waited patiently and giggled to himself hearing Beverly in the other room.

“Now listen up, bitches!” Now she had all their attention. “Eddie looks a bit... different than normal. And it’s a sensitive topic, okay? So, don’t bombard him with questions! We love him and want to comfort him, not pester him.” She said firmly, followed by the other Losers agreeing and confused murmuring.

She stepped back out and grabbed Eddie’s arm, “You ready, champ?” She smiled, already pulling him into the room.

He froze as soon as he stepped into the room. The other guys were basically standing in a line, all staring at Eddie. His heart sank as all their jaws dropped.

“E-Eddie...” Bill started, taking a step closer to Eddie, who’s hands already started to shake with anxiety.

Mike clasped his hand over his mouth, his eyes were soft, but angry, not at Eddie, of course. Stan’s mouth gaped open in shock, he was expecting something to playfully criticize Eddie on, certainly not *this*. Ben, too, was already taking steps forward to get a closer look at Eddie.

Richie stood just as frozen as Eddie, his eyes basically bulging out of his head. The others calmly approached Eddie, trying to make sure he was okay with the attention, but Richie couldn’t hold back. He basically leaped onto Eddie, cupping his cheeks instantly, but softly. Everyone looked equally as surprised as Eddie did.

“Eds...” Richie mumbled softly, his eyes frantically bouncing from bruise to bruise across Eddie’s face. “What happened?” He asked breathlessly.

Eddie moved his hand up to his cheek and put it over Richie’s. Once again, it felt like it was only them in the room, maybe even only them in the world. Eddie stared deeply into Richie’s eyes, wanting nothing more than to kiss Richie until his lungs screamed for air.

That thought, however, was interrupted as the Losers began to gather around Eddie too.

“E-Eddie, what the hell! W-Who did this to y-you?” Bill questioned softly, but cringed at his stutter.

Before anyone could ask again, Eddie mumbled, “I’m okay.” He pouted, not at their concern but at how pathetic he felt once again.

Richie was still cupping his cheeks and Eddie could tell his mind was moving at a million miles per hour. Rage suddenly flashed in Richie’s eyes and spread across his face.

“Who... Who did this to you?” Richie asked, but more so as a demand Eddie told him.

All the Losers knew that tone too well, Richie was *pissed*.

“It’s fine, Rich-“

“Eddie. Tell me.” Richie cut him off, more venom spewing in his words than originally intended.

Eddie flinched at the use of his “full” name from Richie. He knew Richie wasn’t mad at him, but being spoken too in such a harsh tone hurt Eddie immensely.

Before he could speak again, Bev placed a hand on Richies shoulder. “Stop it, Rich. You’re scaring him. That’s *not* what he needs right now. I told you not to do this.” She warned, not angrily, but firmly.

Richie removed his hands from Eddie’s face and flung his arms in the air. “I agreed to that shit when i thought he got a bad haircut or

something! Someone hurt *my Eds* and you're asking me to calm down?!" Richie barked back, eyes widening as realized, *he just yelled at Bev* . Eddie's eyes were also wide, but not for the same reason.

"I'm- I'm sorry, I didn't mean to yell..." his voice trailed off momentarily. "But aren't you angry too? Aren't any of you?" He looked around hysterically, trying to see if anyone was on his side.

Beverly sighed and placed her hand on his shoulder once again.

"*Of course* I am, he called me over last night to help him. I'm furious that some idiots did this to him. But getting angry isn't helping him or the situation, we both know this." She offered a sad smile up to Richie, "You can't go around starting fights that you know will just hurt Eddie later, or worse, *more* ."

Eddie's heart swelled as he saw Richie's angry expression fade into a soft one. Eddie glanced down at his feet then back up, only to be met with Richie's eyes yet again.

"I'm okay, really..." He tried to comfort the group, giving a weak smile up at all of them. "Nothing's broken! And I know I look rough, but it'll heal!" He reassured.

Everyone gave him a sympathetic look before Bill wrapped his arms around Eddie.

"I'm s-s-so s-sorry. I-I noticed y-you called and d-didn't call b-ba-back." Guilt flooded his voice and all Eddie could do was hug him back and grip his shirt. "It's not your fault, Bill." Eddie reassured, his knees starting to shake again. Bill's stutter never flared up unless he was stressed, angry or sad; and Eddie could tell he was all three right now.

Another set of strong arms wrapped around the two boys already embracing.

"Eddie, we're so glad you're safe." Ben's soothing voice flooded Eddie's ears, he could feel tears prickling at his eyes yet again. Eddie felt someone hug him from behind without a word, but he immediately knew who it was from the scent of faint cigarettes and

cheap cologne. *Richie.*

Everyone else joined in on the giant Loser group hug.

“Eddie. We love you, y’know? You shouldn’t hide this stuff from us.” Mike added, wrapping his arms around Stan and Ben since he couldn’t reach Eddie under all the other Losers.

Normally, Eddie would jokingly complain about the obsessive contact, but right now, with tears streaming down his face, he smiled. He knew it was silly to be overwhelmed by a group hug, but after yesterday, it felt like paradise. Of course he knew his friends cared about him, it was painfully obvious they all loved each other, but the reassurance of it all was sensational.

Everyone pulled away after a minute or so, everyone except Richie. Richie still clung to Eddie’s chest, his chest pressed to the smaller boys back, like he was holding on for dear life. Eddie maneuvered and shifted his body so he was now facing Richie. He wrapped his arms around the taller boy and held him tightly too.

Once again, it was their own little world.

Richie lifted his head up and tilted it in question as he saw Eddie’s face soaked with tears.

“Why would they do this to you?” He asked in a whisper, barely audible to anyone around them.

Eddie’s brows furrowed and he took a step back from Richie, even if he truly didn’t want to. He made sure everyone was looking at him yet again and let out a sigh.

“Basically, Bowers and his guys jumped me on my way home from school.” He sniffled, trying to gain composure again after the overwhelming comfort he just had . Almost every scowled at the mention of Henry, but Eddie put his hands up, signaling everyone to calm down.

“I guess there’s a rumor he heard about me being...” he paused and searched the Losers faces for some type of reassurance. Beverly’s mouth was already gaping, but in a small smile, knowing what was

coming.

Eddie shook his head and furrowed his eyebrows yet again.

“About me being gay.” Eddie choked. Before anyone could speak, he began again, more frantic to get the words out.

“And, y’know what? That’s right. I’m... I’m gay.”

Eddie was staring down at his feet, too scared to look up at his friends. He knew they would be accepting, there’s no way they wouldn’t be, but still, he was scared.

“It’s okay, y’know?” Eddie was ripped from his thoughts as Stan’s voice cut through them. He snapped his head up, only to see the other Losers smiling at him, except Richie, who still looked extremely shocked. Eddie couldn’t tell if it was good or bad, even after considering all he and Richie had done before.

“W-We love you, if that wasn’t al-aREADY apparent.” Bill added, smiling brightly at Eddie.

Everyone piled onto Eddie for another brief, but loving, group hug. Throughout the whole thing, Eddie couldn’t take his eyes off of Richie’s dumbfounded expression. *Did he really not know?*

“The bell is gonna ring soon.” Ben commented, wrapping his arm around Beverly’s shoulders after they all pulled away from the second group hug.

So, the Losers said their goodbyes and all took off towards their own classes.

Eddie began to walk out the door of the band room before someone grabbed his wrist. He turned around to see a nervous Richie with a sheepish smile on his face.

“I- I know I said let’s hang out on Saturday, but do you want to meet up tonight instead? You can spend the night since I know Mrs. K is out of the house.” He asked, far less confident than he normally sounded.

Eddie nodded his head and hummed in response, a smile threatening the corners of his lips. Richie smiled brightly back, letting go of Eddie's wrist.

"Shall I walk you to class?" Richie asked in a painful british accent.

Eddie giggled, rolling his eyes. "Isn't your class like, on the opposite side of school?"

"I'd walk the world for you, Ed's." Richie said with a wink, causing Eddie's whole face to blush a bright red.

Eddie knew Richie didn't know the weight of his words or how much they truly meant to Eddie. With another giggle and nod, Eddie gave in and the two walked to his first period. Together. For the first time in a long time.

Notes for the Chapter:

i love u!!! <3 <3

5. Helping Hands

Summary for the Chapter:

“Annnnnnnnd done!”

Finally, Richie finished tending to Eddie. Eddie placed his ice pack down on the counter and turned to face Richie, once again, they were chest to chest.

“Thank you... I appreciate it, Richie.” Eddie smiled up at him, slowly raising his arms around Richie’s neck. Richie rested his hands on Eddie’s hips and hummed happily.

“Anything for you, Eds.”

“I told you to stop calling me that...” Eddie tried to protest, but there was no effort in his words. He sounded so content and at ease.

Notes for the Chapter:

1200+ hits and almost 90 kudos???? i’m crying
thank you so much :,) <3

The day went by painfully slow for Richie. He couldn’t focus in any of his classes, in mind was in a haze and his thoughts danced around inside.

Finally, he made it to seventh period. He gave a dreamy grin to Eddie across the room as he walked in late to class. He ignored the teachers scolding as he stared at Eddie, a shy smile on his face and a faint blush spreading across his cheeks.

He couldn’t help but get excited thinking about seeing Eddie tonight. It had been a few weeks since the two got some alone time. He wanted to hold him as they talked and cuddle him while playing with his hair and kiss him while-

“ *Richieeeee!*” An excited, high pitch voice squealed. A voice Richie unfortunately could put a face to instantly. His *girlfriend* .

Richie was pulled out of his daydreams and sighed heavily. He didn’t

mean to seem annoyed but he couldn't help it. He was too antsy to get out of school, walk Eddie to his house and enjoy each other's company.

A hurt and confused expression flashed across Cissy's face as she sat down next to him, folding her arms across her chest.

"What's wrong, Richie?" She had an exaggerated pout on her lips and her eyes were wide. It was so staged; Richie had seen this look more than a few times.

Was she always this annoying? Richie shook his head and tried hard to not show his disgust on his face.

"No! I just... forgot I didn't do the homework last night! Sorry." He lied, glancing down at his bag with his completed homework inside. It was a bad lie if she truly knew anything about Richie, he was extremely smart. Although he didn't always pay attention in classes, he always did homework, and *always* scored remarkably high.

Though, apparently Cissy didn't actually know him too well because she was absolutely relieved by his response. Her face lit up yet again and she grabbed his face, pulling him in for a sloppy, open-mouthed kiss. Richie's eyes were wide as he gently put his hands on her shoulders, pushing her away. His skin crawled with discomfort and disgust. He offered a small smile, but anyone could tell it was forced and plastered. Anyone except Cissy, that is. He truly wondered if she paid attention to anything but herself.

She smirked, painfully unaware of how desperate Richie was to stop whatever the hell was happening, and moved her hands into his hair, tangling her fingers in it. Sure, Richie loved having his hair played with, but she was just pulling it in all sorts of awkward directions that *hurt*.

"Y'know..." Cissy paused and bit her lip, fluttering her eyelashes, "My parents won't be home this weekend, you could come over tonig-"

"Sorry, I already have plans."

Her face became red with embarrassment, but she had a disgusted look on her face, like Richie had just insulted her.

“Oh.” She said harshly, retracting her hands and putting them in her lap. “That’s fine.” She turned her head and looked down at the desk in front of her.

Richie decided not to push since the teacher already began to speak.

He glanced at Eddie, who was looking right back at him. Richie couldn’t help but smile, winking at him from across the room. Eddie stuck his tongue out but Richie could obviously see the blush creeping up on his cheeks yet again.

The rest of that class was dull to say the least. Very quiet, too. Too quiet. Richie really didn’t mean to hurt Cissy’s feelings, but from her silence and *death glares*, he could tell her definitely did.

The bell rang and Richie sprang out of his seat, more than excited to see Eddie and walk home. However, there was a harsh grasp on his wrist, tripping Richie as he was starting to walk. He whipped his head around to see Cissy staring up at him from his seat, a *very* pissed off look on her face.

“Cis?” He questioned, raising an eyebrow while his mouth cracked into a confused smile. She didn’t speak, which made the situation far more awkward and tense than it had to be.

Richie braced himself to get bitched at, to be accused of seeing another girl and blowing Cissy off. Yet, she simply let go of his wrist and turned back to her bag and began to pack her things up.

Richie’s eyebrows furrowed but all his frustration faded away into excitement as he glanced behind him and saw Eddie waiting at the door for him. It was almost as if Richie completely forgot about Cissy because he walked away without a care in the world.

“Eddie!”

The two winded through the crowded hallways quietly. Eddie led the way and not for a moment did Richie lose sight of him. Finally, they made it out and began walking together, side by side. It was quiet, but not quite uncomfortable.

“How was your day, Spaghetti?” Richie questioned, looking down at the boy next to him. Eddie sighed and kept his eyes glued to the pavement.

“Don’t call me that.” Eddie huffed, “It was boring, I guess. A lot of people asked about my bruises.” His tone in his voice was annoyed, however there was a lingering sadness to it.

Richie put an arm around Eddie’s shoulders, squeezing them together softly, throwing off the whole rhythm of their walking. Eddie let out a small giggle and playfully hit Richie’s chest.

“What about you?” Eddie finally glanced up at him, which almost made Richie’s heart break seeing all the bruises and scratches.

I couldn’t stop thinking about you all day. Ed’s, I can never stop thinking about you. You drive me crazy. I’m so in love with you and there’s nothing I want to do more than kiss you right now.

“Kinda lame,” Richie laughed halfheartedly, “Glad to be out of there. Ready for the weekend!” He said, squeezing Eddie softly again. Eddie laughed, but winced. He pulled his hand up to his lip and held it gently.

“Do you have any medical supplies at your place? I have some wraps I need to change...”

Richie nodded, letting his eyes rack up and down Eddie’s body. When Richie’s eyes finally met Eddie’s again, his face was flushed, his lips parted slightly. Richie practically gawked at the sigh.

Before he could do anything, Eddie stated the obvious.

“Richie, we’re here?” His eyebrows furrowed as he gestured to the Tozier home as Richie was still walking slowly. His face was dazed, too love struck to realize he was walking by his own damn house. His eyes widened as he realized and smiled lazily, meeting back up at

Eddie's side.

"Whoops!" He shrugged, pulling his house key out of his pocket.

"Weirdo..." Eddie giggled softly, watching Richie's hands with care.

They made it inside and basically ran up to Richie's room, despite not having to worry about parents. The two set their stuff down and Richie was about to fall onto his bed until he saw Eddie standing still, shuffling his feet.

"What's up?" Richie asked, tilting his head and walking towards the smaller boy until they were almost chest to chest.

"Could you help me?" His voice trailed, "With- With my bandages and wraps! Bev helped me yesterday and I'm not sure if I can- do it by myself-"

"Of course, Eds." Richie cut him off, he'd been doing that a lot today.

He smiled contently down at Eddie, bringing his hand up to his cheek. Eddie leaned into the touch, but only briefly before turning on his heels and making his way to the bathroom. Eddie knew the place like the back of his hand to say the least. He'd been visiting the Tozier residence since Elementary school, after all.

Eddie stood, looking at himself in the mirror. His eyes grew soft and his hands began to tremble yet again. Richie moved in and stood behind Eddie in the mirror. Wrapping his arms around Eddie's waist, he gently rested his forehead on his shoulder. It was a tender and vulnerable moment for both of them, even though they didn't dare speak a word to each other.

"Chee', can you get some type of ice-pack downstairs?" His soft voice flooded the quiet bathroom, echoing slightly.

Richie nodded, retracting his arms and turning back. "Don't miss me too much!" He said, exiting the room. It was reassuring to hear Eddie huff then chuckle behind him.

It only took Richie a minute or so to put some ice in a bag, he also grabbed two water bottles. He made it back to the bathroom and

before he could make some type of joke, his jaw went limp.

Eddie stood there in the bathroom, shirtless, with his bruises traveling across his back and chest. Richie couldn't help but be angry at the sight. How could someone do that to Eddie? Eddie is the sweetest, smartest and bravest person Richie has ever met. So, how could someone do something so cruel to such a *good* person? If Bowers lays another finger on his precious Ed's, he's a dead man.

"Jeez... you don't have to stare like that..." Eddie has a small smile on his face, but his voice was meek.

Richie shook his head, but couldn't take his eyes off of Eddie's back. He walked towards Eddie, offering the ice pack and one of the water bottles to him.

"Sorry... I- uh- I thought you might be thirsty or something so I also brought that..." Richie chuckled awkwardly, but it only faded into a sigh when Eddie smiled up at him.

"Thank you." He chuckled softly, then turned back to grab the wraps behind him. Eddie was about to start before Richie put his hands on his hips, planting a soft kiss on the back of Eddie's neck.

"Let me help you, please." Richie's voice came out desperate despite his efforts not to sound that way.

Eddie simply nodded and handed him the wraps. He lifted his arms a little so the wrap could go under them easily, this also allowed him to put the ice pack to his swollen lips.

Richie got to work, tenderly wrapping Eddie's wounds and kissing the back of his head, his neck and the tips of his ears. The best part was that Richie got to watch Eddie's face blush and watch his body shudder ever so slightly through the mirror.

" *Annnnnnnnd* done!"

Finally, Richie finished tending to Eddie. Eddie placed his ice pack down on the counter and turned to face Richie, once again, they were

chest to chest.

“Thank you... I appreciate it, Richie.” Eddie smiled up at him, slowly raising his arms around Richie’s neck. Richie rested his hands on Eddie’s hips and hummed happily.

“Anything for you, Eds.”

“I told you to stop calling me that...” Eddie tried to protest, but there was no effort in his words. He sounded so content and at ease.

Richie couldn’t help but stare at Eddie busted, yet still beautiful, lips. There was nothing stopping him from kissing Eddie like he normally did, no one was around. Yet something about truly kissing Eddie would make this beautiful dream come crashing down into reality.

Eddie came out today. That means he might actually *like* Richie. Maybe even *love him*. Richie wanted that more than anything, but still, he was beyond scared.

So, Richie decided to avoid Eddie’s lips for the time being, until he could sort himself out. Instead, he moved his lips down to Eddie’s neck, first littering small, faint kisses against Eddie’s skin. However, those began to turn into open mouth kisses, even some bites, leaving faint red marks across his neck. Eddie gasped, tangling his fingers blissfully into Richie’s hair.

“Chee’... can we go back to your room?” Eddie asked between gasps and subtle moans, yet somehow, innocence still dripped from his tongue. Richie nodded eagerly, picking Eddie up from his thighs.

Giggles and fumbling ensued as Richie struggled to open his bedroom door while still holding Eddie. Finally, they made it into the room and Richie gently placed Eddie on his bed, Richie on top of him, holding himself up with his arms.

For a moment, all he could do was stare down at Eddie in pure bliss. This was *almost* perfect. Though, somehow, it still hurt, even with Eddie all to himself at the moment. Richie was greedy, he wants him to himself *all the time*. Not just for a night or a weekend.

Eddie laid there breathless, looking as stunning as ever, but concern

flashed over his face and he pulled a hand up to Richie's cheek.

"What's wrong?" He asked soothingly, rubbing a small circle with his thumb into Richie's cheek. Richie couldn't help but sigh into the gesture, smiling contently.

I love you more than anything in the world. Hell, you are my world. I want you all to myself, you are my everything, Eds. I can't think about a life without you. Please, just love me back.

"Nothin, just thinkin' about how you have too many clothes on." He winked, gaining a shove in the shoulder from Eddie, which almost made Richie collapse on top of him.

Eddie's hands played with the hem of Richie's shirt, trying to seem innocent and patient. However, Richie knew that was Eddie being needy and he wanted Richie's shirt off. So, instead of teasing further, he sat up and pulled his shirt off in one swift motion, leaving them both in just jeans.

Eddie let his eyes drift over Richie's body, smiling to himself as he lightly traced his fingers over his cold skin.

Richie could've died on the spot. Eddie was smiling so warmly at him. Sure, lust was there, but there was something else. Something soft. Something *stronger*.

Richie was pulled out of his thoughts as Eddie gently tapped his arm.

"I know this might sound lame..." Eddie was nervous, his hands were shaking subtly. "But, I'm just really sore. My body fuckin' aches. Can we... just cuddle?"

Eddie's eyes couldn't meet Richie's. Did he really think all Richie wanted was sex? He chuckled softly, laying down next to Eddie.

"Ed's, of course. I would never want to hurt you."

Before Eddie could thank him, Richie began to run his trashmouth yet again. "I mean unless you wanted me to some time. I aim to please."

This earned him a slap on his chest from Eddie, who couldn't hold back his giggles.

"You are so fucking dumb!" There was no anger in his words though, just pure fondness.

So the two laid on Richies bed together, cuddling, kissing, talking about nothing for hours and simply enjoying each other.

Eddie fell asleep first, cuddled right up to Richie's side, his head in the crook of his neck. His heart was practically melting as he looked down at Eddie's peaceful sleeping face.

"I love you, Ed's."

Silence fell over the room once again and Richie held onto Eddie tighter. He smiled fondly, pressing a kiss against the sleeping boys forehead.

Richie doesn't remember when he started dozing off, but he fell asleep, still cuddling Eddie.

Things finally seemed normal in their own special way.

Things finally seemed *perfect*.

Notes for the Chapter:

thank you for all the support! i'm so glad people are enjoying this story :,) ilysm <3

6. Everything Will Be Fine, Right?

Summary for the Chapter:

It was only a ten minute walk, but to be fair Richie cut through the woods a bit. He wasn't anxious about talking to her, more so excited to find himself free once again. They'd only been dating a little under six months, right? She would find someone after Richie, there's no way she couldn't.

Then Richie would have Eddie, and they both could live their pretty little lives happily. Right?

Notes for the Chapter:

i'm so sorry it's taken me a while to update! this chapter was so difficult for me to write and i'm not entirely sure why :,) thank you so much for all the support though! it's keeping my motivated to write!

tw: homophobic language

“Yeah, mom... Yeah, I’m sorry I was just really tired last night... No, I didn’t go anywhere...”

A hushed voice flooded Richie's quiet room, causing him to stir. He moved his arm to drape it across Eddie, but his arm fell flat against the mattress. Richie picked himself up and looked around, searching for traces of Eddie.

And there he was, pacing back and forth across Richie's room with his phone held to his ear, in nothing but his boxers. He was murmuring simple replies, Richie could tell he was trying to keep his breathing steady.

Groggily, he called out a quiet “Ed’s”. Apparently, that must have startled Eddie. He basically jumped in surprise at Richie's words, then smiled apologetically at him once he composed himself again.

“I know! Mom, I’m almost *eighteen* . I can handle myself and the

house.” Eddie let out an exasperated sigh, but quickly shut his mouth as screams and shrills came from the other line.

Even though Richie just woke up, it wasn’t hard to put the pieces together. Eddie was talking to, or more so being *talked* to, by none other than the infamous Sonia Kaspbrak. Richie could see it in the way Eddie’s eyebrows furrowed and how his eyes were becoming glossy; he was on the verge of breaking. With everything that’s happened to Eddie recently, it’s not a surprise he’s close to melting down; and Richie was ready to be there for him every step of the way.

He patted the spot next to him on his bed, motioning for Eddie to come sit down. A look of defeat crossed Eddie’s face as he slowly dragged his feet, finally flopping down on his back next to Richie.

“Yes, I’m sorry. I told you, I’m perfectly fine!” Eddie’s voice was raised two octaves, panic rising in his tone. All Richie could provide was a gentle hand caressing Eddie’s cheek and sympathetic looks.

Finally, the blubbing from the other side stopped and Eddie mumbled a small “I love you” before tossing his phone to the side and burying himself into Richie’s side. Richie shifted his position so he was also laying down. He wrapped his arms tenderly around Eddie and rested his chin on top of his head. Eddie wasn’t crying or shaking, just clinging onto Richie’s sides.

Once he calmed his breathing, he tilted his head up and left a small kiss on Richie’s shoulder.

“What happened, Eds?”

Richie could feel Eddie’s sigh against his chest, which sent a small shiver down his spine. He pulled back to get a good look at Eddie’s face. His hair was matted and his eyes had a red hue to them. His bruises were healing, but not nearly as fast as they needed to. Richie brought his hand up to Eddie’s cheek yet again, letting him lean into it.

“Just my mom being... herself. I woke up with tons of missed calls and texts.” Eddie chuckled softly. He wasn’t looking at Richie’s face,

his eyes were trained on his neck.

“Ms. K should know her sweet Eddie-Bear is safe with me.” He teased, but not in an annoying way. He spoke in a tone that was cautious and caring. Eddie rolled his eyes, bringing one of his hands up to Richie’s lips and placing a finger upon them.

Richie debated being gross and licking his finger, but even he could tell it wasn’t the right time. So instead, he placed a gentle kiss on it, the corner of his lips curving up. Eddie’s cheeks flushed an adorable shade of pink, making his freckles stand out.

Richie blushes too as a dopey grin spread across his lips. *I am so in love with you.*

“I really mean it, Eddie. You’re always safe with me...” Richie’s voice trailed off, he didn’t want to make this about him. Yet, a small voice in his head was nagging him to ask, so he couldn’t help it.

Shockingly, he spoke in a quiet and insecure voice, so unusual for the cocky and snarky boy. “Why didn’t you tell me first?”

Eddie blinked, a perplexed smile forming on his face, but that quickly faded when he realized what Richie actually meant.

Eddie froze momentarily, collecting and organizing his thoughts.

“I didn’t know what you’d think, especially because... y’know... how we are...” Eddie motioned with his eyes at the two of them, cuddling in only their underwear.

Richie bit his lip, shifting his gaze from Eddie’s eyes to his lips. *He was scared of my opinion? He was worried I wouldn’t be accepting?*

He was speechless, which shocked himself. Eddie opened his mouth to speak again, but Richie cut him off.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry you didn’t think you could tell me. Eddie... we’re best friends, I love you no matter what!”

Eddie grimaced at the words that left Richie’s mouth. But, he smiled back up at Richie once again, only he had a sad look in his eyes, like

his heart had just shattered. Though, Richie couldn't see truly see that pained look.

"Best friends." Eddie repeated.

Anyone who would've seen this scene would laugh. *Two boys sharing a bed shirtless. One boy with hickeys littered across his neck, given by none other than boy number two. And he just called them best friends?* It's comical, truly.

Richie knew how he felt about Eddie. He knew how in love he truly was with him. Though, he felt too guilty telling Eddie that when he was still technically with Cissy.

So, he made a plan in his head, he was going to see Cissy tonight, break things off. He'd go over to Eddie's right after a lay it all on him, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. They could date and Richie wouldn't have to worry about an annoying girl anymore. The plan was *perfect*.

"Hey, Richie?"

Richie was pulled out of his thoughts as Eddie's small voice ripped through the silent atmosphere.

"Yeah, Eds?"

"Why were you avoiding me over the summer?"

Richie's heart skipped a beat as a cold chill ran across his skin. He wasn't shocked at the question itself, but the tone Eddie was talking in. He sounded so *broken*. Richie couldn't help but rub a small circle into Eddie's cheek.

"Oh fuck, Eddie, I'm sorry. I really didn't mean to. I was just trying to figure my shit out. But, I think I finally have, so I promise you, I won't avoid you anymore. I just didn't want Cissy to catch us together." Richie let that last part slip out, and he could tell it was definitely not the right thing to say. Eddie's face flashed with hurt and confusion, causing his mouth to gape open slightly.

Eddie remained silent, which worried Richie. He knew he fucked up, but there was sentiment in his words! The last part was the only shitty part. He thought about apologizing, but he decided he could do that when he went to Eddie's house after talking to Cissy.

So instead, he sat up and ran his fingers through his hair. He threw his obnoxiously long legs over the side of his bed and slipped his feet into his beat up, red slippers.

"Do you want to make breakfast or maybe go out to eat?" Richie asked, glancing down at Eddie, who was still laying down and lost deep in thought.

Richie cleared his throat causing Eddie to startle.

"I uh.. I should probably go home. I have school work to do and chores and y'know..." His voice trailed off as he sat up and got off the bed, throwing his dirty shirt from yesterday on.

"I could help you with some of it?"

"That's fine. I'm sure your girlfriend would like to see you, anyways." Venom spewed in his words as he threw on his pants.

Richie sat in awe, his brows knitted together. *What the fuck?* Richie is going to breakup with her to be with Eddie. Why is he mad?

All Richie could let out was a choked "Oh" and with that Eddie was walking down the stairs. However, before he could make it to the end of the stairs and to the Tozier front door, Richie charged down the stairs.

"I'll see you later." He said casually, gaining a puzzled face from Eddie.

"Huh?"

"You'll see." Richie replied smoothly with a wink.

Eddie shook his head and rolled his eyes, though Richie couldn't tell if he was truly annoyed or not.

Once Eddie stepped out, Richie let out a deep sigh.

The plan was designed. He was going to throw on some clothes and over to Cissy Clark's house to officially breakup with her.

He trudged up the stairs and grabbed a towel from the hallway closet. He entered his bathroom and showered longer than he normally did. He was caught up in his thoughts and ended just standing under the water for fifteen minutes or so, fantasizing about being with Eddie. Once he finished, he brushed his teeth and decided to let his hair air dry since he knew Eddie liked it that way.

Richie made his way back to his room and pulled on a pair of black, ripped jeans. He put on a simple AC/DC tee shirt he had lying around, then threw on a flannel over it. It was simple and looked a little lazy, but he didn't mind.

He also pulled on a pair a chunky, worn-down boots with mismatch colored laces. He put his glasses back on, walked to his mirror, and smiled at himself. Not because he looked good or anything actually about himself. He smiled because he was finally going to tell Eddie how he felt, and he is almost positive Eddie feels the same way.

With that boost of confidence, Richie finally left his house and started walking down the street towards Cissy's house. She said her parents weren't home this weekend so it would be a pretty simple task to get over. Even if it wasn't, Richie still would have had to break up with her. There was only so much time before Richie couldn't handle not being with his precious Eds.

It was only a ten minute walk, but to be fair Richie cut through the woods a bit. He wasn't anxious about talking to her, more so excited to find himself free once again. They'd only been dating a little under six months, right? She would find someone after Richie, there's no way she couldn't.

Then Richie would have Eddie, and they both could live their pretty little lives happily. Right?

Richie made it to her door and knocked hesitantly. Okay, maybe he was *a bit* nervous. Yet, he kept his head up and crossed his fingers.

It took a moment but finally the door cracked open. It was a small crack to look out of at first, but then a sharp gasp came followed by the door swinging open.

“Richie! You came!” She smiled, wrapping her arms around his neck. Richie chuckled shallowly, gently pushing her back. Her smile began to fade.

“I came because I need to talk to you.” He said quietly, offering a sympathetic smile.

Just after those simple words, her soft demeanor turned dark and threatening. Her eyes narrowed, making her piercing blue eyes even sharper than before. Her brow furrowed and a piece of her hair fell in front of her face. Richie swallowed thickly, digging his fingernails into his palms.

“I already know.” She began, her tone was hateful and cruel.

“What-?”

“I know you’re a faggot, Richie. I know about you and your fag friend. Kaspbrak, right? He’s a fag too?” Her voice was high pitched and hysterical, yet hatred spewed out of her mouth.

“Don’t bring him into this shit.” Richie warned, still taken aback by the sharp change of atmosphere.

“Oh, so I was right? I’ve seen the way you look at him in class. The way you’d always look back at him when you met up with me. Have you been sneaking off doing fucking sick and disgusting things together while you were with me?”

Richie could tell she was hoping he would say something to contradict that question. She wanted him to say *no*. But he couldn’t. Because he’d be lying.

He stood there in front of her, looking at his shoes. He could feel her eyes on him, burning holes into his forehead.

"I can't believe you." Cissy said in a gasp, her voice was now trembling. "If you're a faggot then why-?"

"Stop using that word, Cis."

She scoffed, then continued. "Then why the fuck were you with me? Do I look like a boy to you? Did you imagine I was a boy when were together? Did you imagine I was *him*?"

Richie winced at her words, he knew he would feel bad, but certainly not as bad as this. He didn't think he's have to come out to her or whatever the fuck was happening right now.

"I... I thought if I was with you, my feelings for... him would go away." His voice was meek and timid, so unlike his normal, peppy tone.

"I was just a tool for you? An object for you to use because you were too scared to admit you're a fucking faggot?" She screamed, tears streaming down her face.

"Stop using that fucking word!" Richie yelled back, finally looking up at her.

He regretted it instantly and reached out for her shoulder, only to have his hand swatted down.

"Fuck you, Richie. You're a fucking piece of shit. You're a disgusting fucking fag."

Cissy said as calmly as she could, wiping the tears off her cheeks. "Go home."

And with that, she stepped back into her house, slamming the door in his face.

Richie stood in awe, staring at the now closed door.

What the absolute fuck just happened?

Notes for the Chapter:

whoa! kinda a crazy chapter, huh? wonder how this'll all play out...

Author's Note:

thank you so much for reading! new chapters will be uploaded every week or so! i'm not sure how long this fic will be, but i'm aiming for 7-10 chapters. slow burn, babyyyy